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Fulbright Says Nasser Sees U. S. Press Bias

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Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) has returned from his first trip to the Middle East thoroughly "impressed" with United Arab Republic President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Nasser's argument that he has not been given a fair break in the United States press.

"They (the Arabs) think our press is dominated by Zionists," Fulbright declared in an interview yesterday. "I have a feeling that we don't appreciate the Arab point of view. I think our press, generally, presents it in a way that makes it appear that he (Nasser) is just being arbitrary."

Fulbright's U.A.R. trip came at the suggestion of Eugene R. Black, president of the World Bank, and was coupled with a formal invitation from Nasser. The Senator spent four days in Egypt and had two two-hour interviews with Nasser, both in his home and at his office.

He also visited Jordan for a half-day and Israel for 1½ days, during which time he had a 2-hour interview with Ben-Gurion.

Fulbright said he found Nasser "extremely sensitive to the criticisms of him in this country." Nasser told him that Rep. Emanuel Celler (D-N. Y.) faithfully rebukes him in a speech every two weeks.

And Fulbright found Nasser particularly "resentful" of a recent amendment by Sen. Paul H. Douglas (D-Ill.) to the Mutual Security Authorization Act. The amendment, although not binding, declares that the Administration should not give foreign aid to nations which block international waterways.

"He (Nasser) thinks the amendment says, 'Be a good boy and open the Suez Canal [to Israeli ships] and we'll give you some wheat,'" Fulbright declared. "I think we could refrain from such things as the Douglas Amendment and boycotts of ships [New York maritime workers recently picketed the U. A. R. ship Cleopatra], and those things."

Fulbright said he found Nasser "not nearly as violent in private as in some of his public speeches on Israel. He was sort of reasonably reasonable." By contrast, the Senator reported Ben-Gurion to be "a very positive individual. He is positive that the Arabs' main purpose is to push Israel into the sea.

"Both men are afflicted with the ancient prejudices," Fulbright said, and he foresees "no easy solution."

The Senator reported that Nasser will open Suez to Israeli ships only if Israel resettles the Arab refugees who fled their homeland when the State of Israel was established.

Ben-Gurion, in turn, thinks Nasser is not really interested in the refugees at all, Fulbright said, but in an Arab war against Israel.

Fulbright also reported that Nasser told him that he had resisted embracing Communism in the late 'forties, even though he read all the prescribed Marx and Lenin books and one of his close friends did join up.

"Nasser said he couldn't give up his religion, for how else could he tell right from wrong? And he said he couldn't accept Communist dictation," Fulbright declared.

Fulbright said Nasser depicts himself as a "positive neutral." And as for being opportunistic in accepting foreign aid, the Senate concluded: "I think he would take every advantage he can get, but he is very sensitive to 'strings.'"

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